

Draft: WRK/rhz
18 July 1951

PSB -- The Meaning of Psychological Operations

1. If anyone knows what he is to do, he can usually determine how to do it. Probably the most important single problem now before the PSB is to determine what it is to do.

2. By its title, it is a Board concerned with psychological strategy at the National level. A useful definition of strategy, as it pertains to the current cold war, might be—"the art of distributing and applying all the means available to the Government to fulfill the objectives of National policy.

3. In the present struggle the basic objective of American policy is to win active moral support of the major peoples of the world. In other words, our strategy must be devised to attract allies, to win over neutrals, and even to gain supporters in the camp of the enemy.

4. The real aim of strategy always lies in the psychological sphere. The psychological permeates and dominates every decision made with respect to the current cold war, whether American or Soviet, or made by any other nation. The seeds and roots of the present conflict lie in the human will. For the United States to gain its objectives in the present cold war, it must change and modify the opposing Communist will and bring it into compliance with our own policies.

5. A properly conceived and conducted cold war strategy should aim to produce strategic situations which will alter the world's psychological climate in our favor.

6. Changes in the psychological climate can never be brought about by direct psychological action. Psychological attitudes are induced by concrete activity. While there is no such thing as a purely psychological operation, the various pressures which can be applied by one state upon another, the propaganda operations most closely approaches the substance of psychological operations. Propaganda endeavors to short-cut the normal method of changing a psychological attitude -- by action -- but even the standby tools of propaganda (broadcasts, pamphlets, pictures, etc.) are a form of action themselves. All of the tools of propaganda warfare may produce some results for a limited period of time on their own, but unless they are backed up and supported by concrete actions in the political-military-economic sphere, they soon lose their power. ?

7. It is obvious to most people by now that actions in the political-military-economic field invariably produce psychological results. The employment and the movement of military forces, for example, have recognized psychological effects. The closer military dispositions and strategy contribute to the total psychological process of changing the enemy's will, the closer their employment approaches the ideal. Likewise, political actions, such as the formation of alliances, the recognition of new governments, proposals for disarmament, and so forth, have significant psychological attributes beyond the substantive actions themselves. By the same token, there are psychological consequences to almost every aspect of our economic relations with other nations. ?

8. The cold war has been brought about by Soviet initiative. They have recognized the importance of the psychological factor, and have regarded psychological effects as the end product of all their manipulations and maneuvers in the realm of more conventional activity. The Politburo, the directing head of the Soviet cold war, is the virtual embodiment of an organization designed to gain victories in the psychological realm.

9. Our machinery for applying pressures in the primary fields of political force, economics, and propaganda, are in general well organized. ^{However} We have ^{had} no agency for thinking, planning, and coordinating the psychological forces generated by actions in any of the primary fields. Each agency ^{has} continues ^{to} think and act primarily in terms of its own immediate mission, and ^{has} gives little or no systematic thought to how their own programs can best contribute to a favorable change in the total psychological situation. ?

10. We need to devise means of integrating the psychological effects of our conventional programs so as to marshall them in overwhelming force against the enemy's will. We must learn how to fulfill and combine whatever actions and programs are most suitable in the winning of the psychological battle at the least possible cost. It is vital that the aims and actions of our Government should be conducted and explained and propagated in such a way as to wrest the initiative from the U.S.S.R. with the least possible delay. These speculations make it apparent that the criterion of psychological desirability will impose restricting conditions on programs carried out without taking the psychological factor into the fullest consideration. To compensate for these restrictions, an integrated ?

psychological strategy should make it all the easier for our political-military-economic programs to attain the primary objectives established for them. The reciprocal relation between psychological strategy and purely political-military-economic or propaganda operations must be recognized.

11. Only in this way will we be able to cope with the essentially psychological character of the struggle in which we are engaged. The cold war cannot be compartmentalized. Man is a political animal, and the forces that make him move are psychological. A successful strategy of the cold war can only be erected on this sure foundation.